

## Five Nights At HIVE

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Summary: A series of drabbles, generally between Nero and Raven, reflecting on past and present adventures... and screw ups. Rated T for infrequent strong language.

### 1. Chapter 1: 5 Nights At HIVE

Raven took a long drink of coffee.

"Natalya, are you sure you're ok?" asked Nero, concerned.

"Yes. Fine. Absolutely fine."

"You haven't blinked in the last 5 minutes."

"Blinking's overrated."

"This is your seventh cup of coffee today, dear."

"I didn't sleep."

Nero sighed, "I'm sorry I didn't think this through."

"Didn't think what through?"

"You know what." Nero sighed again, "I mean, it wasn't going too bad until this simulator. Only 7 injuries. That's pretty good. And they were generally just minor ones when people tripped in the dark."

"Except for little Joshua."

"Look," Nero replied in exasperation, "it was just one foot, he's got another one, I don't know why everyone has to keep going on about it!"

"I'm still not sure of what you were trying to achieve by making simulators based on horror games," Raven said.

"It was supposed to make people work better under pressure, help them build up their nerves. Basing them on horror games was just to make sure we knew they'd find it scary without having to bother thinking of anything ourselves."

"We should have stuck with Slender. It was simple and didn't have many chances for injuries."

"Except for people tripping over things. And when AdÃ© broke his hand trying to sucker punch slenderman."

"I knew there was a reason I liked AdÃ©."

"He certainly hasâ€| moxy. But people stopped getting scared after a while. They'll probably stop getting scared of this one tooâ€| eventually."

"Max, 3 people are in counselling. Even Francisco admitted he had nightmares. You sent me in there to prove it wasn't too scary. And I haven't slept in 50 hours."

"I didn't realise that Five Nights At Freddy's was so bad. I mean, it was a little nerve racking, but when I played it I got through it eventually."

"The first time you played it you screamed and hit yourself in the face trying to cover your eyes when Freddy got you."

"I didn't know the game started when the man was still on the phone!" Nero protested, "I said I got through it eventually."

"But you weren't there in a dimly lit room with real gigantic animatronic animals hunting you down to murder you without anything to protect you. I'm never looking at a teddy bear the same way again, Max."

"OK, fine, I'm pulling this scheme."

"Good."

"It's not like I have much of a choice."

"It's still good you're not going to continue."

"I still don't know how Nigel managed to set the place on fire."

"I don't know how Argentblum managed to get through it without breaking a sweat."

Max nodded in agreement, "at least one good thing came of it."

"What good thing?"

"I can now make Malpense cry just by saying 'Pirate Cove'. I've been incorporating the phrase into my lessons."

"That's cruel," admonished Raven.

Max shrugged, "It's kind of in the job description. And Malpense is a little shit anyway."

Raven couldn't argue with that.

## 2. Chapter 2: The Usual Assassin Duties

Raven was used to being woken at all times of day by her blackbox, but normally it was a panicked message from Nero or the Chief of Security, not an oddly timid HIVEmind.

"I'm sorry for waking you," the AI apologised.

"It doesn't matter, I haven't been having good dreams since the Freddy incident. What is it, HIVEmind?" Raven asked, already getting dressed in anticipation of a day of getting shot at.

"You don't need to get too dressed up Raven."

"Why?" Raven asked as she paused with her tactical belt in her hands.

"I needâ€¦ to ask a favour."

Raven narrowed her eyes suspiciously, "what favour?"

"It'sâ€¦ could you go to Nero's office, please?" Raven was growing more concerned, why wouldn't Nero have just called her himself?

It was barely 2am as Raven rushed through the HIVE corridors. There was no one around except a security squad who paid her no attention as she passed. She reached Nero's office quickly.

"What is this about, HIVEmind?"

"It's not serious," HIVEmind insisted, "I justâ€¦ I couldn't leave him."

"What?"

HIVEmind slid the door open. Nero was slumped at his desk, his head rested over his folded arms, his eyes closed peacefully, and his mouth slightly open.

"I couldn't wake him up," HIVEmind admitted with embarrassment. Raven wondered briefly whether that was because Nero was too deeply asleep or HIVEmind simply didn't have the heart to disturb the clearly exhausted man.

Raven let out a breath and smiled slightly, walking over to where Nero was.

"Max?" she whispered, shaking him slightly. He made a small groaning noise but otherwise didn't respond, "what are we going to do, HIVEmind?"

"Could you carry him?"

"No, he's too big and I don't want to have to explain if he wakes up halfway to his room."

"Can't you wake him up?"

"That would be cruel."

"We are in a school dedicated to training criminals," HIVEmind pointed out.

Ignoring HIVEmind, Raven asked "why is he even in here at 2 in the morning?" Nero had always been a bit of a workaholic, but normally he wasn't so engaged in work that he forgot the basic human ability of how to remain conscious.

Getting no answer from HIVEmind, Raven gingerly removed the file Nero had been looking at from underneath him. Opening the file, she saw that the first page was a report from 15 years ago, detailing an attempt on Nero's life that Raven remembered all too well. She grimaced at the details that had been recorded, embarrassed at her 16 year old self; partly because of how willing she was to hurt someone who was to become her most trusted friend, but also partly because she'd been stupid enough to not notice a man with her own rifle pointed at her. It seemed she had found her own file.

"Perhaps you shouldn't be reading that," remarked HIVEmind.

"Are you going to tell on me?" She received no reply. She turned the page and a photo fell out, landing face down on the floor.

She lay the file on the desk, jumping slightly when Nero shuffled slightly in his sleep, and picked the photo up. When she saw what it was she couldn't help blushing and grinning, it showed Raven and Nero standing together, Nero's hand round her shoulder, both smiling like idiots as a building burnt to the ground behind them. Nero's arm was stretched out of the photo, as he had taken the photo. It had to be at least 13 years ago that the picture was taken, one of Raven's first missions as Nero's bodyguard.

The burning building hadn't exactly been part of the plan, but Raven could remember her surprise when Nero hadn't admonished her for screwing up, but smiled and told her "the world's a better place without that ugly thing anyway."

Raven stared at it for a moment longer, realising that she'd almost forgotten it had been taken at all, before placing it back in the file on the desk.

"He'll kill me if I leave him here," Raven said to HIVEmind, and resolved to wake Nero up.

e Nero up.

### 3. Chapter 3: Image Is Nothing

Somewhere in England it was a lazy summer afternoon. Kids were sweating in classrooms, gazing longingly out of windows while overworked English teachers were checking the clock every 5 minutes, waiting for their chance to go home and set up their barbecues.

On the other hand, Raven and Nero were sitting in an underground bunker, known as Nero's office. But they were being equally lazy.

There were no threats of world destruction, no parts of the school blown up, no assassination attempts. All in all, the past few weeks had beenâ€¦ boring. Nero had even finished all his paperwork. The emptiness of his desk felt surreal.

"Raven?"

"Yes?"

"Do you think should have an image change?"

"â€¦A what?"

"You know, I think the whole 'distinguished gentleman villain' schtick is getting a little old. I should switch it up, everyone's doing the genius cyber villain nowadays."

Raven snorted, "Distinguished."

"What? I'm distinguished."

"I've seen you try and swallow an eraser just to prove you had better control of your gag reflex than another man."

"I couldn't just let him insult me like that."

"And then you threw up on a \$3000 carpet," Raven continued.

"That's not important right now! Look, do you think I'm boring or not?"

Raven couldn't help but smile. Which turned out to be a bad idea.

"Hey, why are you smiling? I didn't say anything funny."

"No, it's just-"

"Just what?" Nero demanded defensively.

"It's justâ€¦ a little bit cute." There was a stunned silence. Raven briefly considered running.

"â€¦Cute."

"I mean-"

"Fucking \_cute\_?"

"In a sort ofâ€¦ midlife crisis way," said Raven, which was not a good move.

"\_Midlife crisis\_?"

"That's not what I meant."

"\_Please\_, feel free to clarify."

"I meant it was cute that you think you're boring. Because you're not, you're not boring."

"Oh, okay." Nero was practically speechless, which in turn made Raven speechless. It was a very strange situation. A couple of minutes went by without a word being said.

"Are you sure I shouldn't try an image change?"

"Max, come on."

"Because I try and change it up a little every so often. You know, when I started out I had this nice little butterfly knife that I'd slice people's extremities off with-"

"\_What\_?" Raven had not heard this story before.

"Did I not tell you? It was so much fun intimidating people with it during conversations, so after that I tried the calm collected chess master thing, now I'm onto charismatic villain. But I was thinking I could just play up the PhD a little bit and be the genius villain."

Raven contemplated for a moment, having almost forgotten that the 'Dr' at the beginning of Nero's name wasn't just for show, and that he genuinely had a PhD. She still wasn't sure how, or what for, but she just didn't question it anymore.

"I don't know," she said. "If you let people underestimate you, you can make things easier for yourself," she figured it would be easier to simply go along with the conversation.

"Good thinking, Natalya. What about a different accent?"

"Why would you bother putting on an accent?"

"Who says I'm not putting one on right now?"

Raven narrowed her eyes, trying to figure out if Nero was joking. She knew that he had a wide repertoire of voices, but she'd never considered that the 'British nobility' accent was just yet another fake. Nero didn't give her a chance to ask another question.

"How about something Eastern European?" he asked with a thick accent.

"Which country is that?"

"Latvian, I think. It's so hard to remember which ones haven't been absorbed into Germany or dissolved into 7 smaller states or whatever."

"I like you as you are."

"You sure? What about Canadian, there aren't many Canadian villains, eh."

Raven laughed, "stop it, Max."

"Okay, okay, sorry," he said, reverting to his English accent.

"Good." The sat in silence for a little while longer.

"Australian?"

"\_Max\_!"

It was those sorts of days that Nero was glad that he knew the basics in using makeup for disguises, as trying to explain a black eye to the entire school was not something that he would have enjoyed.

**\*\*Author's Note: I swear I don't ship Naven, they're just my brotp. And I like sickly sweet brofics.\*\***

#### 4. Chapter 4: Holes

**\*\*Author's Note: If it isn't obvious, this is set after Nero is stabbed by Raven in Zero Hour.\*\***

"You look better."

"Great. Do I?" his speech slurred slightly, "That's fantastic. Tha's brilliantâ€|" Nero trailed off in frustration at not being able to think of something smart to say.

"A lot better," Raven repeated. It was a lie, he only looked marginally better now that he wasn't covered in blood. He looked pale, and sallow, and older. And the clothes from the sickbay really didn't suit him.

"Fantastic. Because I \_feel\_ like I've been impaled."

Raven felt another wave of guilt over why Nero was lying in a hospital bed, despite everyone she talked to telling her it wasn't her fault. She almost wanted someone to punish her, to tell her that she'd screwed up. She didn't know why.

Nero's eyes closed, and Raven wondered if he'd drifted back into unconsciousness halfway through their conversation. She couldn't blame him if he had, the drugs pumping through him could knock out a horse. Well, it couldn't, that would have killed him. Raven was exaggerating for effect.

"I'm sorry, that was rude," Nero said quietly, his eyes still shut.

"I don't think you need to worry about being socially polite in this situation."

"Mmm. How long have I been asleep?"

"A couple of days." That was a lie, he'd been awake just an hour ago, but Raven knew he wouldn't remember it.

"Oh," he said, indifferently.

Nero cringed as he felt another wave of pain from the wound in his abdomen. His hand moved to where he had been stabbed, but Raven gently stopped him.

"Dr Scott told me to stop you messing with your bandages," Raven explained.

Scott was well aware of what sort of patient Nero could be, and so had had the foresight to prevent Nero interfering with the wound. He had told Raven that Nero would need at least another 3 weeks of bed rest before he could even think about returning to his duties. Raven had tried not to laugh at that, knowing that the only way they'd achieve that level of lethargy would be to keep him half delirious on painkillers the entire time.

"Dr Scott can go suck a-"

"Don't, Max, he's the one who gives you painkillers," as guilty as Raven felt, Nero on heavy duty medication never failed to be amusing.

"My IV drip is giving me painkillers."

"And you tried to rip that out too. It's not like the films where you can just yank them out with no repercussions, you know."

"I didn't try and take my IV out," Nero protested. Raven didn't see the point in arguing. "How are you, Nat?" Raven made no comment on the nickname, but made a mental note to make sure to bring it up later.

"I'm fine."

"Didn't I shoot you in the head?"

Raven's hand brushed the stitches at her temple, "you missed."

"No shit. I sort of gathered that from how you're not brain dead and all. Looks like I've got to practise my aim."

"Planning on shooting me again?"

"Frankly, I'm tempted. This bloody hurts, you know." Nero's tone was friendly, but it stung Raven, who hung her head.

"I'm so sorry, Max," she whispered, wiping away a tear, "this is my fault, and Lewis is my fault-"

"Don't be daft, Natalya," Nero placed his hand on Raven's, "You can't be blamed for mind controlling nano-robots."

"But I should have-"

"I think, Natalya, that we can at least agree that we can blame the Furans, how about that?"

"Alright, Max." She squeezed his hand, "Max?"



"Hmm?"

"I lied, you look like shit."

"Fantastic."

## 5. Chapter 5: The Fifth Night

**\*\*Author's Note: This is set just after the 3rd book.\*\***

"Do you want some coffee?"

"No, thank you."

Raven paused, uncertain if what she'd heard was right.

"Excuse me?"

"I don't want any coffee," Nero smirked a little.

"But you always want coffee."

"Not now, I've broken my caffeine addiction."

"Did you really?" Nero's smirk dropped a little at hearing the doubt in Raven's voice.

"\_Yes\_. I was imprisoned 3 months with no caffeine, and withdrawal only lasts 2 weeks. My body is purged. I no longer need coffee to function. I'm basically invincible."

"You might have been exaggerating a little by the end," Raven suggested.

"I wouldn't agree. I mean, really, life's going to be very different without caffeine, this whole fiasco was worth it to feel the beautiful sensation of pure blood running through my veins."

Raven looked at Nero with a deadpan expression. Although already back behind his desk, he was still covered in burns, and Raven's shoulder throbbed with a dull ache from where she'd been shot.

"Yes," she said slowly, "completely worth it," she was slightly worried that the lack of his frequent coffee had scrambled his brain. Maybe they could set up some sort of IV drip of caffeine for him, "it's not like I got shot at all."

"Don't act like you're the only one that got hurt," he gestured at his burnt skin, "I was electrocuted. Twice."

"Did I mention that I got shot twice?"

"Imprisoned for 3 months."

"And fell into the Thames?"

"I almost got my neck snapped in half by someone standing on it."

"What? When did that happen?"

"On the space station," Nero explained, "when Otto was taken over."

"Wait, a 12 year old almost killed you?" Raven's eyes lit up with this new information.

"No! I mean, yes, technically, but I was injured beforehand."

"By an elderly man on life support," Raven pointed out.

Nero glowered at her, "that's not fair," he said shortly.

"Look, can we just agree that next time you need to sort out an addiction to soft drugs, just ask me to help instead of toppling the head of our society," Raven suggested.

"Fine."

"Fine."

They were both quiet for a moment, before Raven spoke again.

"So do you want some coffee?"

Nero sighed, then shrugged, "alright."

End  
file.